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Basic English Revisited: A Student Handbook (Book Review)

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Its style is polished, direct, and nuanced; the author never intrudes into the content. The text is seasoned only with essential notes that invite further reading, rather than intimidate the non-specialist. Yet, the bibliographical essay is both current and selective of only the best literature available for all periods covered. The index appears to be thorough and accurate, and the maps complement the text. The binding, boards, and paper are quality material. The dust-jacket is dignified, but attractive. And, most importantly, Mr. Handy's account is superb.

He naturally begins with the European colonization efforts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As the account progresses, he moves back and forth across the border with ease, highlighting the men, events, theological issues and ecclesiastical developments that constitute North-American church history. The book is marked by balance, insight, clarity, and objectivity. Yet, when he is called upon to choose sides in issues of interpretation, Dr. Handy distinguishes himself as a historian who prefers a substantive assessment that reflects deep understanding of the moods and spirits of his subjects, rather than the spectacular and speculative theories that some have adduced.

Two examples of his approach serve as good illustrations. The first explains first- and second-generation Puritan relationships with New England Indians. While some anthropologists and cultural historians have denounced the Puritans for their treatment of the Indians, Handy not only presents a more balanced picture (in which he depicts the lamentable as well as the laudable moments of this relationship), but he is also appreciative of the godly concern and compassionate spirit with which some of the Puritans tirelessly evangelized Indian tribes, achieving dramatic results and earning the genuine gratitude of many native Americans. Secondly, he discards bizarre theories that attempt to explain the Great Awakening, for a more historically insightful interpretation:

Concern for the authority of the Bible and for the personal appropriation of religious truth had been part of Protestant life in America since the early seventeenth century, and the Awakeners who dramatized these themes often found ready response. The great attention paid by Puritan preachers to such themes as conversion, the new birth, and sanctification was echoed in the exhortations of the preachers of the revival. (page 77)

The volume also manifests evenness. Twentieth-century events are handled with as much depth and perception as those of the colonial

period. Handy has saturated himself in Canadian as well as in U.S. church-history literature. Whether he is focusing on such social forces as immigration, the Civil War, or French-Canadian cultural identity, or on denominational histories and theological controversies, he does so with equal skill. The result is a general survey that should prove extremely durable.

This book offers a bonus for the readers of *Pro Rege*. As members of a constituency living in both Canada and the United States, we have for the first time a historical interpretation that displays the common influences on churches in both countries. Immigration, denominational and ecumenical developments, wars from King William's War to Viet-Nam, civil rights issues, the evolution of religious pluralism—to mention only a few—have shaped the churches of both nations. Often this has occurred simultaneously and similarly in both places. At other times, it has happened with marked differences, for example, in the area of higher education, with respect to nineteenth-century Canadian longings for something of a national religious establishment, and regarding French versus English traditions in Canada, as opposed to the "melting-pot" ideal in the U.S.

What emerges from juxtaposing Canadian and U.S. church history, as Handy has done, however, is an enriched understanding of both. Serious Christian Reformed believers who value both their national identity and their confessional-ecclesiastical affiliation, and who are attempting to develop a tempered understanding of both in the North-American situation will especially appreciate this book.

As far as Dordt College is concerned, the curriculum could well be reviewed in the light of implications raised by Handy's study. With a student population that is one-fourth Canadian, and with a religious faith motivating and directing the campus community towards what H. Richard Niebuhr has termed the authentic Calvinistic stance of "cultural transformation," Dordt College has a unique opportunity—perhaps even a God-given calling—to engage in transnational academics for the sake of our Lord. Robert Handy has given that educational option a new dimension of historical credibility. And for that we thank him deeply.

Basic English Revisited: A Student Handbook, by Pat Sebranek and Verne Meyer; illustrated by Chris Krenzke; published by Basic English Revisited, Burlington, Wisconsin, 53105, 1977, 116 pp., paperback, price: \$2.45. Re-

viewed by James C. Schaap, Instructor in English, Dordt College.

The authors preface this handbook by saying that *Basic English Revisited* is "intended to be carried around in hip pockets and purses of high school students." Judged by this purpose, the handbook succeeds, for where else could high-school students find such accessible answers to such diverse problems as when to use a hyphen, or how to treat alkali poisoning? The writers are to be commended for the wide range of information that they were able to collect in just a few more than 100 pages. Combined with the traditional student handbook given to high-school freshmen, *Basic English Revisited* could give any high-school student a thorough, understandable, and workable basis for classes in English, as well as in speech, mathematics, geography, and even driver's education.

The title may be more exploitative of current problems with the term "basic skills" than indicative of the nature of the handbook. Combined with a good grammar manual, *Basic English Revisited* might indeed "revisit" Johnny's basic problems, but by itself, the manual would only serve to provide necessary definitions, a few of which may be less than crystal clear. However, most of the sections of the book are devoted to what are commonly called "communications skills," and the authors do not intend the handbook to serve as a workbook. Nevertheless, by itself, *Basic English Revisited* will do less to cure Johnny's ills than it will to provide him with directions to the clinic.

Far from a fatal flaw, that apparent weakness may actually be its strength. Instead of spending hundreds of pages on grammar exercises and endlessly illustrated rules of punctuation, this handbook is intended only to provide the facts in a form that makes them easily available.

Because of its range, *Basic English Revisited* does offer an important benefit not easily foreseen, both for an English department and for an entire faculty. It will provide a guide for the formal aspects of assignments from all departments. Sample footnotes, bibliographical forms, even a complete term paper are included. Adoption of this book as a basic text would mean that all departments would have a handy common reference to the elements of style and research writing, thereby erasing inconsistencies which students sometimes feel between different teachers or departments.

There is much to praise in *Basic English Revisited*. The manual is put together attrac-

tively, the illustrations are both catchy and relevant, a thorough index makes even the most trivial information readily available, and an extensive list of commonly misspelled words is a boon to anyone who has spent more time sitting than standing during spelling bees. Moreover, the price is right.

The Great Reversal: Evangelism and Social Concern, by David Moberg, Rev. Ed., Philadelphia: Holman, 1977. Reviewed by Rich Buckingham, Instructor in Psychology.

Moberg, formerly at Bethel College in Minneapolis and presently Professor of Sociology at Marquette University, has provided us with a sociological analysis of the various divisions that have arisen among Christians regarding the necessity, motives, aims, and strategies of Christian involvement in the wider culture. Moberg is primarily concerned with the division between the so-called "social gospelers" and "soul-winners," that is, between those emphasizing social action and those favoring individual evangelism. Although this is not to be taken as an absolute division, it does characterize the internal relations of many evangelical denominations and the external relations between the evangelical and the more liberal denominations. Most of the book relates directly to this cleavage and the possibility of evangelicalism overcoming its neglect of social concern without losing its foundation upon the historic Christian world-and-life-view.

"The Great Reversal" aptly describes what Moberg takes to be a definite and radical shift in the cultural response of evangelical Christianity from about 1910 to 1930, with evangelicals taking a less sympathetic and less direct interest in the cultural issues and problems of the day. Moberg assumes, with some evidence, that before this period, evangelical Christians exhibited a much more adequate degree of social involvement. Thus, "The Great Reversal" in 1910-30. The "fundamentalist-modernist" controversy played no small role in this reversal, the effects of which were felt in most major denominations of North America.

Two chapters in particular stand out: "Barriers to Effective Social Concern" (ch. 5) and "Social Sin" (ch. 7). The former considers various attitudes and behaviors of the evangelical life-style that vitiate an active social concern. For example, there is the attitude of neutrality, in which the failure to act may prove to be